

# Unit



## Customer Service

In this Unit, the students will learn to provide meet and greet service to the customers, guests or tourists at the terminals or designated place, arrange for transporting them to their pre-arranged accommodation or agreed destinations. This Unit also gives a brief idea about the role of tourism industry in economic development and role of travel desk and its functions.

As we know Tourism and Hospitality Industry is also a service industry, so it requires professional services, manners, etiquettes and personality for the managers and employees of the services organisations essentially.

Tourism is about experiences—experiences with people and places, and the most important experience is the first one— arrival and greetings. Get that one right and the rest is much easier.

Arrival experiences include experience at the airport, at the hotel, at the campsite, at the travel company office, in the restaurant, on the tour bus, or at the tourist destination. Wherever it takes place, the thumb rules are the same:

- Be Prepared
- Look cheerful
- Smile
- Be interested
- Be helpful
- Be yourself

To be performed on arrival of the client or tourists:

- Welcoming
- Greetings
- Introducing
- Car hire
- Describing the services that make tourists feel special

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### SESSION 1: MEET AND GREET SERVICES FOR GUESTS ON ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

#### Meaning of meet and greet services

##### Greetings

The way of greeting differs from country to country according to its culture and nationality. For example, *Namastey* is the way of greeting in India and some other Asian countries. The word is said with the palms of the hands held together with fingers pointing up and touching the chin and with a slight bow. Thus, a *namastey* is typically Indian way of greeting. The way of greeting also depends on the relationship and age of the guest.

##### GREET

Greet all the customers and make them feel welcomed  
Respect cultural and other personal differences  
Evaluate and clarify customer's expectations  
Effectively address and respond to the customer's need  
Thank and verify that their needs have been met

Meet and Greet Service can be defined as, 'the pre-purchased service for meeting and greeting a client or group upon arrival in a city, usually at the airport, pier, or rail station or hotels. Service may include assisting the client or group with entrance formalities, collecting baggage, and obtaining transportation to the hotel'.

Services of meeting and greeting are pervasive but when we talk about the Travel, Tourism and Hospitality

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Fig. 3.1 Concierge



Fig. 3.2 Meet and greet spot

Industry, the particular jobs to be performed by the industry professionals are specified. These can be identified as follows:

- **Airport representative** at travel companies for arrival and departure and transfer assistance of the tourists or clients.
- **Concierge** at the hotels in front office or travel desk for performing the same duties for the hotel guests.

### Meeting customers in professional manner as per the company's policies

#### ***Procedure of meet and greet services at the Airport***

Meet and Greet Service at the airport is an important service for tourists as well as for the company, since it helps the tourists in fast-track clearance through arrivals or departures, helping with transfers, baggage and family travel and ensures a swift, smooth and safe passage through the airport. The Customer Service Executives (Meet and Greet Officers) help in dealing with any issues that might arise due to cultural differences or language difficulties. Travel companies even have their own lounges, reserved exclusively for the tourists or their customers. This service is designed to provide a completely stress-free airport experience.

On arrival as well as departure at the airport, all the passengers (Indians or foreigners) are required to move towards immigration check. The passports are duly stamped at the arrival as well as departure. Passengers should ensure that their passports are duly stamped before leaving the immigration counter. Only foreigners coming to India are required to fill up the D (Disembarkation) Card. Passengers are required to present valid travel documents i.e., passport and visa (if applicable) for immigration clearance.

Meet and Greet Services are offered to independent and group tourists, business executives, and lady travellers travelling to unfamiliar or challenging locations.

After meeting the tourist or guest on arrival at the airport, a Customer Service Executive (CSE) of an



organisation performs one's job of meeting the tourist by displaying a placard with the guest's name, flight number and organisation name. After meeting the tourists or client, the travel and tour company representative introduces himself by presenting a bouquet and extending a warm welcome to the tourists. They share their name, Travel Company/Tour Operator's name, and supporting information. One example of welcoming is as follows:

***First introductory meeting with tourists and clients on arrival***

*Namaste/ Hello/Good Morning everyone.*

My name is Dinesh. On the behalf of Visit India Tours Pvt. Ltd., I would like to welcome you all to Delhi, the capital of Incredible India. The bus is ready to pick all of us and it would ride to your hotel. The Ashok Hotel, which is at the distance of 13 km (or 8.1 miles) and it will take about fifteen minutes to reach. Right now I'd like to take a minute to familiarise you with the area and give a brief safety precaution. You have to fasten safety belts and remain seated until we reach our destination.

***Meeting and Greeting at the Railway Station***

The Customer Service Executive in Tourism and Hospitality sector should ensure the given points while offering meet and greet services to the clients at the railway station:

1. Train arrival or departure time and railway platform or bus stop details
2. Railway stations or bus terminus and main exit gate
3. Have the Guest details, i.e. number of persons, class of traveller i.e., business or leisure
4. Ensure for transfer arrangement
5. Ensure for hotel booking
6. Any other special requirement

***At the travel agency***

Sometimes the tourists or group of tourists visit the travel company's office with the travel company

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representative— CSE, during their tour for any reason such as, to give remaining payment or to meet the company's owner. Then the tourists must be welcomed and given greetings at the company premises also, this act makes the tourists feel welcomed. To greet clients or tourists, 'GST Model' must be followed (Fig.3.3)—

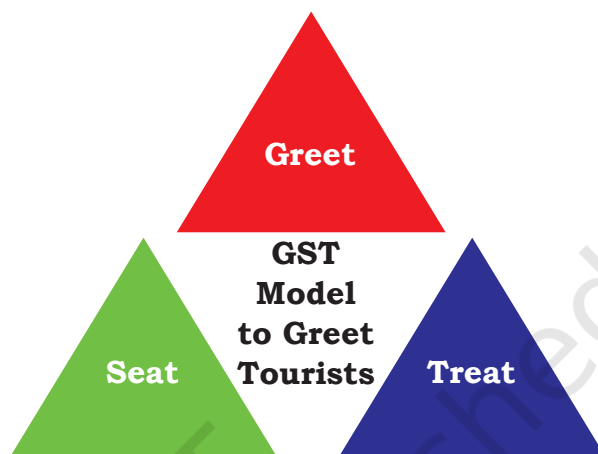


Fig. 3.3 GST Model for greeting customers

**Greet**— As soon as a guest enters into the office, approach them and greet them with a warm welcome. Follow that greeting with a friendly 'How are you?', 'How is your experience till now with us?', 'You are an important client for us and happy to serve you', etc.

**Seat**— Offer the guests a seat in the reception area or at a specified guest area.

**Treat**— Offer the guest with coffee, tea, or water, and if they accept, bring their beverage to them. After greeting, seating, and treating, let the appropriate person or boss know that their client has arrived. Check with the visitor if he or she is waiting for more than a few minutes.

### At the hotel premises—during check-in

A front desk officer should offer each and every guest a warm welcome— even if (and especially if) a guest's jet lag may have given them a short temper. The front desk attendant needs to smile throughout their entire shift, anticipate the needs of guests as they approach the desk and solve all the issues with a calm and understanding demeanour.



## SOPs regarding baggage upkeep

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### At the time of check-in

As soon as the guest's taxi arrives at the door of the hotel, the doorman or gatekeeper should open the door of the taxi and following points should be considered while dealing with the guest and collecting the baggage:

1. You should always help the guest to come out from the taxi.
2. Take out the luggage from the taxi.
3. Tag the luggage as per the policy.
4. Escort the guest.
5. Assure the guest that you are handling the luggage with care so by that time, the guest can complete the check-in formalities.
6. After the room allocation put the room number on the luggage tag.
7. Escort the guest and take the luggage to the allotted room and keep the luggage on the luggage rack and inform the guest for the assurance.
8. If the room is not ready, ask the guest 'May I keep your luggage in the luggage room?', and keep the luggage in the designated area till the guest gets the room.

### At the time of check-out

1. Bring baggage from the room.
2. If possible communicate with the guest in the passage area regarding the stay or facilities offered to them.
3. If the guest is going late, keep the baggage in the luggage store room and issue the receipt of baggage to the guest.
4. At the time of actual departure, keep the baggage in the taxi and inform the guest, and see off as per the company policy.



## Attending the customers and management of customers

### Procedure of greeting the guests while they check-in at the hotel

#### **Procedure 1**

Case study of a first time visiting guest on arrival when they approach the reception on their own, the doorman greets the guest.

#### **Standard**

Guest reaches the hotel porch. The doorman opens the door with a smile and wishes the guest, 'Good Morning/ Afternoon/Evening, welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_.'

#### **Procedure 2**

Bellboy greets the guest and offers baggage assistance.

#### **Standard**

The bellboy wishes guest as per the time of the day and assists them with the baggage. 'Good Morning/ Afternoon/Evening Sir/Madam, allow me to take care of your baggage.'

#### **Procedure 3**

Bellboy confirms the count of baggage.

#### **Standard**

- Bellboy confirms the number of baggage with the guest.
- Guest approaches the reception.

#### **Procedure 4**

Reception greets the guest and offers assistance.

#### **Standard**

- Reception Associate wishes the guest, 'Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening, welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_ Sir/Madam. How may I assist you?'
- Guest: I am checking-in...

#### **Procedure 5**

Reception offers seat assistance, makes the guest feel comfortable and request to know their last name.



**Standard**

- Reception Associate: 'Please make yourself comfortable. May I request you for your last name under which the reservation is being made?'
- Guest: 'I am Deepika Singh.'

**Procedure 6**

Receptionist takes out the registration card of the guest.

**Standard**

Receptionist will then take out the registration card of Ms. Singh.

**Procedure 7**

Guest registration card will have the following details taken at the time of reservation.

**Standard**

- Guest name
- Guest company name
- Guest arrival and departure date
- Guest room category (booked for)
- Guest room rate
- Guest credit card details
- Guest contact details

**Procedure 8**

Registration card is printed on arrival if reservation is made on the same day.

**Standard**

Guest registration card is to be printed on arrival if registration card is not printed earlier, which may happen if the reservation is made on the same day.

**Procedure 9**

Guest registration formalities

**Standard**

Receptionist completes the guest registration formalities.

**Procedure 10**

Programming of guest room key (digital card key)

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### **Standard**

Receptionist will then make the key for Ms. Singh.

### **Procedure 11**

Guest relations to escort the guest to her room.

### **Standard**

Receptionist will introduce Ms. Singh to the guest relations and request her to escort Ms. Singh to the room. 'Ms. Singh, my guest relations Ms. Komal will escort you to your room.'

### **Procedure 12**

Wish the guest a pleasant stay.

### **Standard**

Receptionist wishes the guest a pleasant stay using formal salutation—'Ms. Singh, have a pleasant stay with us'.

### **Procedure 13**

Delivery of guest baggage to the room.

### **Standard**

Receptionist will inform the bellboy about Ms. Singh's room number for baggage delivery.

### **Procedure 14**

On multiple check-ins

### **Standard**

In case of multiple people checking-in, guest relations will request the guest to identify one's baggage and informs the same to the bellboy before proceeding to that person's room.

### **Meet and Greet Culture, Profession and warm welcoming according to company policy**

The Travel and Tourism Company and company's frontline employees' behaviour with the clients or customers have a huge impact on the employees down the line. Here are some tips to ensure that the Travel and Tourism Company and its representatives greet the tourists and customers in a way that makes them



feel satisfied and served by their hospitable conduct from the very first meeting at the arrival of the guest at the airport:

### Show that you recognise them

In hospitality industry, if you call your customer by name or try to recognise them, they feel happier. You can have a conversation with the customer about their previous stay and can also say 'It is a pleasure to have you with us again'. If they are a repeat customer, always greet them in a positive and humble way. This customer greeting and recognition helps in making profitable repeat business.

### Ask if they have visited before

Generally because of the politeness of the staff and service attitude, customers come back to the particular organisation, such customers are one of the key factors for profitable repeat business. If an organisation has such a guest, instead of saying 'May I help you', it will be better to say 'Hello/Good Morning Sir, have you been here before?'. This sentence gives the message that you recognise them. It is one of the ways to collect the feedback about their previous stay.

### To make familiarity with the customer

While receiving a domestic or foreign tourist, the CSE may start communication with the guest about their journey being comfortable or he can talk about the climate so the customer can have an idea about the local climatic conditions.

### Always compliment appropriately

Hospitality professional or Meet or Greet Officers must always keep in mind to compliment the guest appropriately, whether they are dealing with the guest personally or on telephone.

### Use a conversation piece

Whenever entering the city or hospitality property, the professional may take the advantage to talk about the

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best facility or features their property is having or they can communicate about their uniqueness or guest dealing policies.

### Timing is everything

During the communication whatever information is provided to the customer, it should be accurate. Greetings by the hospitality staff during arrival makes the customer feel that people care for him.

### After meeting the customers

It is the best way to deal with the customer whenever meeting at the airport or any terminal, ask about his future journey and convey that it is the duty of the hospitality staff to make his stay comfortable because sometimes the customer is unaware about the destination condition and facilities available at the destination.

Fortunately, if you possess the knowledge of the local area and climate, always communicate it to the customer in the best professional manner.

After receiving the customer, escort the guest for their stay as per the itinerary. During communication and escorting, you can build your company business and have repeat business too.

Let's discuss about some points on how to welcome a visitor or tourist after greeting them. When you are meeting a visitor of another country at your country's airport, apart from the welcome, you shall talk about the following topics to make them feel comfortable and display your hospitable conduct:

- Comfortable flight
- If they have visited this country before?
- Giving special offers to serve their hunger, thirst, like tea or coffee, etc.
- The weather of the country and the weather where they came from.
- A brief knowledge of your city and country from tourism point of view.
- What's going to happen in the next few hours of tours or so?



- Destinations and interesting facts in the visitors' country that you know can also be shared for conversation.

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### At the airport

The following information should be collected prior to the arrival of the clients or tourists:

- Airport whether domestic or international
- Terminals of arrival
- Name and flight number of the guests
- Flight timing and origin point of the client, etc.

### Greeting customers effectively

It is important to make a good impression while greeting a customer for the first time. The way you approach a customer leaves a lasting impression on them and decides your future relationship with them.

Here are some tips to give you the advantage when greeting customers initially:

#### ***Have a positive attitude***

Keep your conversation light-hearted, yet professional. Maintaining positive attitude while conducting business is an effective way to begin a business relationship.

#### ***Placards***

Placards help the company representative to receive clients with their company names, group names and flights written on it to be displayed on the airport while the tourists or guests arrive. It also helps to identify unknown or first-time clients, especially the foreign clients.

#### ***Welcome notes***

Welcome notes and printed greetings for the special clients to make the image of a company.

#### ***Gifts or bouquets***

Nothing speaks better than a bouquet of fresh dazzling flowers. This helps you to arrange something special for that special client.

### ***Greet with their name***

Greet them using their names with polite words, and make sure you continue using it throughout the conversation. Don't overdo it, but using their name puts them at ease and helps them feel like you care about them personally and professionally.

### ***Keep good notes***

Keep it personal and professional. Ask a few personal questions as 'icebreakers', and then move into professional mode. Make sure you maintain your light-hearted attitude while getting down to business. Keep good notes of your conversation so that when you are finished with your meeting, you will have a good record of what was discussed.

### ***Keep focus on the customer***

If you are meeting your customer for the first time, keep your focus on your customer and their needs. Keep any conversation surrounding you to a minimum, and enable the customer to talk about themselves. Most people like to hear themselves talk, so training yourself to be an excellent listener will make the difference in building an effective business relationship with your customer.

### ***Ask specifically how you can help them***

Once you have a good idea of what they need, ask how they want you to help them. Be specific about the products and services your company provides, and ask them which ones they believe would most effectively meet their needs.

### ***Keep smiling***

This helps keep things friendly and upbeat through the course of the business conversation.

### ***Shake hands firmly***

Make sure the handshake is firm. A firm handshake exudes confidence in yourself, your company, and in your ability to transact business effectively. A limp handshake would perhaps give an impression of disinterest and low confidence. A firm handshake would

In times of contagious pandemic (like Covid 19), avoid the practice of shaking hands and adopt a hygienic (contactless) way of greeting the clients, like folding hands in a gesture of Indian *Namaste*.



be to grip the individual's hand strongly for a moment and let it go.

### ***Make steady eye contact***

Along with a firm handshake, steady eye contact is very important in making an excellent first impression. Throughout the conversation, make sure you look at your client in the eyes as much as possible without seeming overbearing. This will help you to appear confident and will develop trust within your client as you continue working with them.

### ***Have important documents ready for the customers***

Before you ever walk into meet and greet of a client on arrival at the airport, all the customer's documents such as their hotel vouchers, tour itinerary, any other travel documents as required and informed earlier by the tourists, must be prepared and carried with you and also an advance copy for the customers should be handed over to them.

This will also help to build you up in the eyes of your customer and ensure you are one step ahead of your competitors. Regardless of the situation in which you find yourself, using all or some of these key tips will help you to build strong relationships quickly as you seek out new business.

### **Importance of clear and concise communication with customers**

Speaking clearly and effectively with your customers is an extremely important skill. A Meet and Greet Officer needs to handle customer queries, and explain information, procedures, policies of the company, and other aspects of the company to the customers.

Clear and concise communication with customers gives positive impression of the company as well as the professional. Customer Service Executive should speak clearly and not mumble. They must articulate the points clearly.

Speaking clearly to the customers enables the customer to have a clear understanding about the hotel's or company's policies and the issue that is being addressed to them. It ensures a zero-error working.

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This sort of understanding will help in maintaining a long lasting relationship with the customer.

### Anticipating the guest needs

Every customer requires some kind of help and they will always have an expectation from the relation officer like Customer Service Executive to provide the help. Anticipation refers to identifying the probable expectation of the guest in a situation. Anticipation of guests' needs allows providing a remarkable customer experience.

#### ***Following points are to be kept in mind while anticipating the guest needs***

1. Anticipate their desires and help the customers in achieving it.
2. Help them avoid potential dissatisfaction or errors.
3. Interject between the customer and the problem before it happens.

#### ***Advantages of anticipating the guest needs***

1. It prevents problems before they occur.
2. This reduces customer service demand later.
3. Let customers know that you are actually thinking about them.

### Importance of meet and greet service (arrival, departure and transit or transfer)

Tourism and Hospitality Business organisation like hotels, Tourism offices, museums, etc., provides assistance such as, airport pick up and drop service requirements to the customers on requests. Sometimes they are on chargeable basis and sometimes, it is provided for free.

A Customer Service Executive takes care of the pick and drop facilities from the airport or railway station or hotels. The services are provided round the clock. Many times, services like private taxis, government taxis, and bus, auto rickshaw or private transport facilities are also arranged.



Meet and Greet Services facilitate the guest in fast-track clearance through arrivals or departures, helping with immigration, customs, transfers, baggage and ensure a swift, smooth and safe passage through the airport. Hotels even have their own lounges, reserved exclusively for their tourists or customers.

### ***Meet and greet service provided on guest Arrival and Departure at Airport***

#### *Arrival and departure*

On arrival, all the passengers are requested to move towards immigration check that is meant for all the passengers, Indians or foreigners, both at the time of arrival and departure. The passports are duly stamped at the time of arrival as well as departure. Passengers should ensure that their passports are duly stamped before leaving the immigration counter. Only the foreigners coming to India are required to fill-up D (Disembarkation) Card. Passengers are required to present valid travel documents, i.e. passport and visa (if applicable) before proceeding for immigration clearance. Thus, the following services are provided on arrival or departure:

- A warm welcome and escort on arrival at the airport.
- Assist during immigration, passport control and customs clearance.
- Assist with baggage collection.
- Escort passengers to the receiving party in the arrival area.

In tourism terminology, transfer means shifting the tourist or tour group from the point of arrival (i.e. airport, railway station, or any other place) to the hotel and back from hotel to the point of departure. Excursion tour includes— (i) pick up at the airport, railway station or any other point as fixed by the travel agent with the tourist group, (ii) transfer from that point to the hotel, (iii) visit to various places of tourism importance, and (iv) dropping at the airport, railway station or any other point. Tour execution involves many services, like

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booking of a tour package, transfers, visit to tourist place, etc.

A transfer is the first interaction between tourists and travel agency staff or the Meet and Greet Officer. A representative or tour guide meets the group at the point of arrival with a placard in his hand.

The person responsible for transfers must have a list of the names and telephone number of the tourists.

### ***Transport used for transfer***

In tourism many transport facilities are used, it is also known as tourist transport. Tourist transport is comfortable, suitable for long journey, having facilities like— microphone, speaker, pushback seats, and space to put or hold water bottles, medical kit or first aid box, separate seat for tour guide. Modern bus coaches have washrooms in the coach itself.

## Practical Exercise

### **Activity 1**

Demonstrate the procedure of providing meet and greet services to a customer, guest or tourist.

#### **Material Required**

Writing material

#### **Procedure**

- Divide the students equally into groups.
- Instruct them to go through the procedure of meet and greet services given to a customer, guest or tourist.
- Allow one group to demonstrate the procedure.
- Other groups will observe the mistake or a step omitted.
- After completion of the demonstration, other groups will point out the mistakes and show the correct way of doing it.
- Allow students to note down the mistakes done and suggest possible correction.

### **Activity 2**

Demonstrate the way of greeting the customers when they arrive for the first time at the hotel.

#### **Material Required**

Writing material



**Procedure**

- Dress-up like a professional and visit a star category hotel nearby your area.
- Discuss with the front office manager and ask about the procedure of greeting the tourists or guests who arrive first time in the hotel.
- List all the procedures and protocols in your notebook.
- Write a briefing note of your visit in the project file.

**Check your progress****A. Multiple Choice Questions**

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ is a tourism professional of a hotel or a travel company who makes the first impression of its company's image in front of the tourists by his hospitable conduct and extending warm welcome.
  - (a) concierge
  - (b) bellboy
  - (c) doorman
  - (d) Customer Service Executive (Meet and Greet)
2. The Customer Service Executive of a tourism company performs:
  - (a) airport pick-up and dropping the tourists.
  - (b) follow the tourists' itinerary.
  - (c) follow up the bookings being done earlier for tourists.
  - (d) all the above tasks.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ allows to provide a remarkable customer experience.
  - (a) Anticipation of guests
  - (b) Forecasting of guests
  - (c) Receiving the guests
  - (d) Communication with guests
4. One of the best ways of greeting is, \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) "Hi, have you been here before?"
  - (b) "How may I help you?"
  - (c) "How are you?"
  - (d) "This way please"

**B. Subjective Questions**

1. Define 'Meet and Greet Services' in tourism and hospitality.
2. Explain the greeting formalities at the time of check-in to the hotels.
3. Discuss the process of greeting the customers effectively. Write the steps that need to be followed for effectively greeting the customers.
4. Describe the meet and greet processes followed at the railway station.

## SESSION 2: COMMUNICATION WITH COLLEAGUES AND CUSTOMERS

### Importance of communication

1. It helps in planning and decision making.
2. It helps in bringing about coordination.
3. It helps in delegation and decentralisation of authority.
4. It helps in developing managerial skills.
5. It helps in improving employee morale.

### Importance of effective communication in industry

No Tourism and Hospitality Organisation can perform well without having effective communication. Effective communication is the result of having good internal as well as external communication.

### Internal communication

This type of communication takes place between different departmental staff. This involves exchange of information within the organisation.

It is of three types:

#### **Formal communication**

This type of communication involves the transmission of official messages or information within or outside the organisation.

#### **Vertical communication**

This type of communication takes place from supervisor to subordinate and vice versa.

Vertical communication is of two types:

- (a) Downward communication: Information flows from top to lower level. This involves passing of instructions to subordinates to do the work.
- (b) Upward communication: Information flow from lower levels to the higher levels. Usually it is carried out in the form of performance reports, suggestions, reviews, input, feedback, etc.



### Informal communication

This type of communication is based on informal relations. Under it, some information is passed through many individuals and covers a long distance, making its origin obscure.

### External communication

This communication is done between the organisation and external sources and officers. This may be government agencies and department licensing authorities and other private and government working bodies.

### Communication can travel in two directions

One-way communication takes place in a straight line from sender to the receiver and serves to inform, persuade or command.

SENDER  $\Rightarrow$  MESSAGE  $\Rightarrow$  RECEIVER

Two-way communication always includes feedback from the receiver to the sender and lets the sender know that the message has been received accurately. The two-way communication direction or process is shown in Fig.3.5.

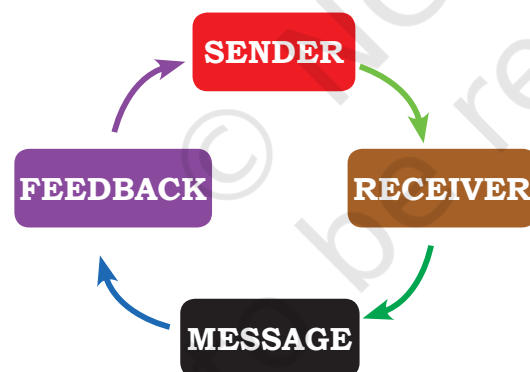


Fig. 3.4 Two-way communication

### Importance of gender in communication

Communication may be affected by gender also, as men and women often think about things differently. Many times when a female and male communicate, certain traditions are followed, such as lack of eye contact and shaking hands, thus affecting perception and communication.



## Body language—an element of communication skills

People can communicate different types of information at different levels of understanding. The communication process consists of more than the spoken or written language. Information is also conveyed effectively through body language.

Body language is another means of communication. Sometimes it can send signals stronger than words. Body language is controlled by your subconscious mind, so a reader can actually understand if there's a difference in what you are saying and thinking. In order to ensure that your words and body language complement each other, you need to practice regularly and develop a habit of it.

Body language plays an essential role in communicating with people. Body language comprises of the gestures and movements we make by the different parts of our body while communicating with people. Certainly, the body language must be in sync with the words.

Points to remember:

- Never be clumsy or stiff while making movements.
- Avoid body language that may be misunderstood or look unprofessional, e.g. winking.
- A consistent eye contact is a positive sign and must be used.
- Avoid fiddling with things around. It may distract the attention.
- Each body part movement signifies something and helps in interpreting. E.g. Standing with hands on hips signifies aggression, nodding signifies agreement and active listening, and biting nails signifies nervousness.

### Why body language?

- Body language can instantly help to evaluate the interests of people.
- It is a personal way of expressing emotions when words don't help.



- It can make the process of communication interesting and non-monotonous.

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### Gestures

There are various gestures that one should avoid while talking to the guests. There are a few gestures that can make you sound more positive and communicate your agreement or disagreement without speaking. Some of the positive and negative body gestures are suggested below.

#### ***Positive body gestures***

Positive body gestures are a sign of confidence and security. They are a sign of active participation and leave a good impression. Positive gestures include:

- Walking upright
- Shaking hands confidently
- Having a pleasant demeanour
- Nodding head
- A steady eye contact

#### ***Negative body gestures***

Negative gestures are a sign of insecurity and restlessness. Such gestures show a lack of confidence. Such gestures should be avoided in interviews or meetings.

- Being stiff or sloppy while standing
- Biting nails
- Getting distracted
- Faking a smile
- Looking at something else, while talking, instead of the speaker

### Dressing

Dressing is an important aspect for maintaining self grooming at the workplace. Pleasant looking staff plays an important role in maintaining the image of any organisation. So, every organisation sets a standard for its dress code.

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***Following points are to be kept in mind by all genders while dressing***

### **Men**

- Dress in a professionally appropriate manner.
- Wear a formal suit or a specified traditional outfit.
- The dress should be comfortable and fit well.
- Avoid loud and flashy coloured ties or scarves.
- Clothing should be neat, clean, and ironed.
- Make-up and nail polish should compliment the dress.
- Shades neutral to the skin tone are best suited.
- Jewellery and hair accessories kept to the minimum are best and non-interfering in work.
- Make sure your breath smells fresh.
- Make sure your teeth are clean.
- Smoking and smoke-smelling breath should be avoided while interacting with a client.
- The hair are neat, clean, and as per the standards set by the organisation.
- Low-heeled shoes would be comfortable in meeting with all the tasks assigned.
- A fresh look in the morning after a bath is welcoming. Avoid using a perfume.

### **Customer expectation and satisfaction**

Hospitality and customer services are linked to customer satisfaction because this industry is related to product, services and customer satisfaction. Now, customers' requirements can be both tangible and intangible but satisfying all of them and hence meeting their requirements is called customer satisfaction.

### **Product or service features**

Exact products or service features, customer emotions, attributions for service achievement, perception of impartiality or fairness and price are some factors which influence customer satisfaction.



## Customers' expectations

The customers' expectations can be known only by keeping yourself in the customers' shoes. Following are the important expectations that a customer would want in a sales or hotel organisation:

1. Attention towards the customer
2. Good and competent service
3. Loyal to the customers
4. Show essential courtesy

## What is Soft Skills?

Soft skills are character traits and interpersonal skills that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people. Soft skills are more difficult to quantify or teach. (Fig. 3.5)



Fig. 3.5 Soft Skills

In Tourism and Travel Industry, soft skills play an important role as this is a service industry. Attainment of soft skills can help in gaining the client's confidence. Staff equipped with soft skills makes the customers happy.

Soft skills are about effective interactions and empathy towards the guests. They are an essential part of procuring and retaining the customers. Highly developed presentation skills, networking abilities, and etiquette awareness help in winning customers.

## NOTES

## Soft Skills during Communication with Customers

### ***Patience***

This is a skill that helps in dealing with any situation or difficult customers. The executive needs to maintain a calm demeanour, remain calm and attentive while dealing with the clients and think clearly, which would be reflected in their actions.

### ***Work Ethic***

The Customer Service Executive needs to be professional in their behaviour. They should start their shift on time and always behave courteously with their colleagues. They should be able to handle work and perform their daily tasks as per their schedule in an organised manner.

### ***Communication Skills***

Customer Service Executive must have good command over language skills especially in the case of second language being used at a work place. They should possess good listening skills as well.

### ***Self-awareness***

Meet and Greet officer should be self-aware of how to deal with the situations of anger, embarrassment, frustration, and inspiration.

### ***Flexibility***

Customer Service Executive should be flexible to work in any difficult situation. They should be multi-tasker in every operational work in an organisation.

### ***Managing Stress management***

Customer Service Executive should be able to stay healthy, calm, and balanced in any challenging situation. They should know how to reduce their stress levels, increase their productivity, and prepare themselves for new challenges.

### ***Teamwork skills***

Being able to work effectively with anyone with different skills, personalities, work styles, or motivation levels to achieve a better team result.



**Negotiation Skills**

Being able to understand the other person's expectation and requirements, offer a solution accordingly and reach a win-win situation which satisfies both sides, and maintains relationships for future interactions.

**Conflict resolution and Skills in dealing with difficult or unexpected situations**

Being able to stay calm and still is effective while facing an unexpected or difficult situation. This includes being able to think on your own and articulate thoughts in an organised manner even when you are not prepared for the discussion or face the situation you are in.

**Importance of body language and gestures in customer communication**

The body language or body gestures, to a large extent, portray the quality of communication. Body language has different meanings in different cultures. Interpretation of body language depends on the culture, situation and relationship with the person as well as the gender of the person. This means that it is not necessary that a particular body language or gesture would have the same meaning always.

Body language is mainly an expression of feeling. For example, if we dislike someone, it is often not possible or desirable to say that directly to the person. However, we can express it through body language. Thus body language can express willingness, confidence and convincing ability.

**Eye Contact**

Direct eye contact indicates focused interest, attentiveness and readiness to engage in communication.

**Facial Expressions**

There is a need to reflect a natural smile on the face while dealing with the customer. Being attentive while talking to the customer will lead to an understanding of the client's needs, whereas negative expressions may lead to a conflict.



## NOTES

### **Posture**

Maintain easy and relaxed posture instead of appearing fatigued in front of the customers.

### **Hand Gestures**

Closed arms represent a communication barrier. It can also indicate mild boredom and lack of interest. Arms behind the neck show waiting for the response.

### **Voice**

The manner in which we use our voice not only helps us to develop our personality but also improve our customer relations. Here are some hints on how to use our voice effectively.

- (a) **Volume**— Just loud enough for the customer to hear and not too loud for everyone else nearby to hear. It should not be too soft for the customers to strain themselves.
- (b) **Pace**— Toned to speak at the speed at which the customers can hear and understand what is being conveyed. If it is fast, they might have difficulty trying to catch up; if it is slow, it could get monotonous or even boring.
- (c) **Pitch**— As per the situation, change the pitch and tone of your voice. In this way we will command customer's attention.

### **Personal appearance and dressing**

A uniform is often viewed as projecting a positive image of an organisation. Maintaining personal hygiene is also an important aspect of personal appearance and dressing. An appearance is a bunch of attributes related with the service person, like their shoes, clothes, tie, jewellery, hairstyle, make-up, watch, cosmetics, perfume, etc. It is related with putting first impression on the onlookers.

### **Promptness in customer service and role in repeat business**

In the tourism and hospitality industry, the success or failure of the business and destinations depends



on its service. Customer Service and expectation is influenced by improving quality standards and providing prompt services. Promises of services done to the customer should be delivered on time. Delay and cancellations of services cause dissatisfaction amongst customers. The CSE must always keep information ready for the guests.

In case of guest complaints and problems, show empathy and make them realise that you understand and will try to resolve all the problems. Attend to the guest and reply positively. Do not make the customer wait for long since this gives a bad impression about the quality of services.

Dealing with the customer with a prompt attitude results in:

1. meeting the customer's expectations satisfactorily;
2. word of mouth publicity of the services offered or recommendations;
3. repeat business; and
4. improved customer relations.

### Record keeping of customer related documents

The travel organisations are also needed to maintain customers' records mentioning complete particulars regarding names and addresses of the tourists, the fare collected from each group of travellers, the particulars of journey and the contract, if any, signed for the journey.

Good record keeping can help the organisations to protect their business, measure their performance and maximise profits. Records are the source documents, both physical and electronic, that specify transaction dates and amounts, legal agreements, and private customer and business details even for the smallest tourism enterprise, such as a shop in the airport selling postcards. Good recordkeeping helps the owner or the manager of any tourism enterprise make the right decision.

A travel company needs to develop the procedures or systems to keep the record of clients annually. A few information containing documents maintained in

## NOTES

Tourism Business are depicted in Table 3.1. Developing a system to log, store and dispose of records can benefit the travel business by allowing them to:

- plan and work more efficiently.
- meet legal and tax requirements, such as licensing authority, which issues the license to the company and monthly return showing particulars of contracts, e.g. state or national tourism authorities of governments.
- measure profit and performance.
- generate meaningful reports.
- protect the rights of the business owner.
- manage potential risks.

**Table 3.1 Types of information found in documents in a tourism business**

Types of Information found in documents	Documents
Financial Records (income and expenditure)	Invoice, receipts
Marketing material	Brochures, pamphlets
Details of planned transactions	Agreements
Correspondence with clients and other businesses	Letters, faxes
Information about staff	Contracts, personal files

### ***Records of clients' details***

Every tourism business should keep records of their clients' or customers' details. It can make a big difference as to how successful a business is, and can save a lot of time and trouble. If hotels and other places of accommodation do not keep a record of their clients' details, they may encounter problems.

The person making the booking books the rooms but may forget to keep a record of the family's details such as their name, address and contact details (telephone numbers and email address). Another important reason for keeping records of client details is for marketing. If clients booked services and get satisfied, they may want to book with your business again in future.

### ***Filing systems***

In tourism business, one of the most important systems of maintaining clients' record is the filing system. The



given figure shows the cycle of records. It shows how the information is stored and can be retrieved as and when required.



*Fig. 3.6 Customers' record cycle*

A filing system is the way the records are arranged using classification and coding, that makes it convenient to locate and retrieve the records.

There are two types of filing systems:

1. Paper filing, usually consists of records and documents in a ringbinder or an arch file, box file or flip file. These files are given codes and labels and are stored in shelves, often in alphabetical order.
2. Electronic filing refers to filing on the computer digitally. These are stored in electronic folders in an alphabetical system or a numerical system as database.

Most travel agencies and other tourism businesses keep a database on their clients. This database contains information concerning the:

- client's name, address and telephone numbers and email.
- client's country of origin, services they used such as booked hotels, tours or restaurants.
- client's likes and dislikes, for example smoker or non-smokers, loves local bears, does not eat porks, etc.
- duration of stay and services, it is best to keep their complete tour itinerary.
- payments and mode of payments details, e.g. cash or credit, etc.

### **Confidential Records**

The documents of a client in any business including tourism and travel, are to be kept secured and confidential, because these can be misused. The details of some of the company records are given here:

## NOTES

### *(a) Basic records*

Cash book or Financial accounting programme that records cash receipts and cash payments.

- Bank accounts— cheque books, deposit books and bank statements
- Employment records— hours of work, overtime, remuneration or other benefits, leave, superannuation benefits, termination of employment, type of employment, personal details of workers, employee personal contact number and employment details.
- Occupational training records for both—the employer and employees, to comply with work, health and safety laws including evacuation and emergency training attendance.
- Sales records— invoice books, receipt books, cash register tapes, credit card documentation, credit notes for goods returned and a record of goods used by the business owner personally.
- Proof of purchases— Cheque counterfoils (larger purchases), petty cash system (smaller cash purchases), receipts, credit card statements, invoices, any other documents relating to purchases including the copy of agreements or leases.

### *(b) End of financial year records*

This is maintained to meet legal requirements, maximise tax return or minimise tax bill at the end of the financial year, it requires the following records:

- Details of stock on hand at the beginning and end of the financial year.
- A list of debtors and creditors for the entire financial year.
- Capital gains details, records of asset purchase— dates and agreements, records of sale, disposal and proceeds, received details of commissions paid or legal expenses, improvements made to an asset and any other records relevant to how you calculate your capital gain or capital loss.
- Depreciation details, original purchase agreements or tax invoices, a depreciation schedule, the cost



of transporting the items to your business (if applicable), and installation costs (if applicable).

- Expense records cheque butts, receipts, cash register tapes, copies of statements and invoices, credit card documentation, details of payment by cash and log books.
- Staff and wages details, full details of wages, employment contracts, tax deducted, fringe benefits, superannuation, sick pay, and holiday pay.
- Basic accounting records such as stock records, accounts receivable, accounts payable, and other records.
- Agreements sales and purchase contracts, loan agreements, rental agreements, lease agreements, franchise agreements, sale and lease back agreements, trading agreements with suppliers, and legal documentation
- Other documents like deposits with utilities, contracts with telephone companies, your business name, registration certificate, and capital gains records.

*(c) Best practices and record keeping*

Depending on any industry like travel and tourism, keeping the following records may be a legal requirement, but it is best practice to keep them for 5–7 years:

- Employee accreditation certificates and licences—copies of permits, registrations and licences that the employees need to do their jobs
- Employees' resume and job applications
- Performance reviews, including assessments of staff performance and agreements between you and your employees, position statements and job advertisements
- Customers and tourists—personal details, products purchased and product enquiries that are useful for finding new customers
- Customer complaints—details of complaints about products, service, staff or anything else, and steps taken to resolve them



## NOTES

- Details of any disputes with other businesses—including how you went about resolving the disputes
- Quotes given and won— specifics of jobs and time spent on them to help with future quoting
- Details of advertising campaigns and success—to make it easier to repeat advertisements and plan future advertising campaigns
- Insurance policies— regularly review and update your business insurance, especially when your business grows or changes

### Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Every organisation needs to perform effective customer management for maintaining, understanding, communicating, delivering and developing the existing customer relationships.

Customer management comprises of processes and policies that are geared to acquire, retain and provide service to the customers. Good customer management increases the customer satisfaction and loyalty. Good CRM includes individualised service to the customer based on information and past experience, if any, with the customer.

#### ***Benefits of customer relationship management***

##### *1. Increase reliability*

Good CRM practices ensure that customers get the delivery of services as per the promises made by the company. This increases the reliability and perceptions of the service. Customers would always like to use repetitive services from those organisations which keep their promises and core service attributes.

##### *2. Increase responsiveness in service*

Following the CRM practices enables the employee of an organisation to achieve 'always help the guest' attitude towards customers. This also indicates that the organisation is attentive and prompt in dealing with the customers' questions, complaints and problems.



### 3. Give assurance to the customer

CRM helps in inspiring trust and confidence among the customers. The employees' knowledge and courtesy inspires trust and confidence in the customer and generates an assurance towards the ability of the firm and its employees.

### 4. Win customer empathy

Good CRM practices help in treating customers as individuals. Empathy is the caring, individualised attention and customised service that the firm provides to its customers. The essence of empathy is providing personalised or customised service to make customers feel that they are unique, special and that their needs are understood.

### **Points to be followed for CRM**

#### *Listen to your customers*

A CSE should listen to the customer attentively. This is an easy way to maintain customer relationships. This makes it easy to connect to the customers. Social media like social apps and email platform provides facilities to reach the customers easily.

#### *Be genuine to your customers*

A Customer Service Executive should fulfil the promises made to the customers, so that the customer feels the sincerity of the service. Always respond to the mail received by the customers for any queries as soon as possible with accurate information. This makes the customers go a long way when it comes to reliability.

#### *Take customer feedbacks*

If the customer has any problems or issues, then provide ample support to your customers, they will, in turn, reward you with loyalty and valuable feedback. This will help maintain customer relationships, and establish the firm as the one in which meeting the customer's needs is a top priority.

#### *Keep in touch with the customers*

A Customer Service Executive must always keep in mind that it is important to be in touch with the customer

## NOTES

with various channels of communication. Just like maintaining friendships, you need to keep in touch in order to maintain customer relationships. Provide holidays cards, birthday greeting tweets or by email.

### Practical Exercise

#### Activity 1

Perform a role play activity for using soft skills during communication with customers.

#### Material Required

Writing material

#### Procedure

- Divide the students equally into groups of four to five members.
- Instruct them to go through the soft skills during communication with customers
- Allow one group to demonstrate the skills.
- Other group will observe the demonstration and note down the mistakes made.
- After the completion of demonstration, other groups will point out the mistakes and show the correct way of doing it.
- Allow students to note down the mistakes done and possible modifications.

#### Activity 2

Visit any hotel or hospitality organisation and discuss with the Front Office Manager about the body language aspects to be followed while attending a guest and anticipating the customer needs. On the basis of the discussed points, prepare a report on the role of body language in the Front Office Department of the organisation.

#### Material Required

Writing material

#### Procedure

- Dress-up like a professional CSE and visit a star category hotel near your area.
- Discuss with the Front Office Manager, the role of body language while attending the guest and anticipating the customer needs.
- Note down all the points and prepare a report mentioning various body language aspects used in a hotel.
- Discuss the report in the class.



## Check Your Progress

## NOTES

### A. Multiple Choice Questions

1. \_\_\_\_\_ of Customer Service Executive should be flexible to work in any difficult situation.  
(a) Soft Skills  
(b) Technical Skills  
(c) Professional skills  
(d) Personal Skills
2. A \_\_\_\_\_ is often viewed as projecting a positive image of an organisation.  
(a) uniform  
(b) brand name  
(c) logo of the company  
(d) All the above.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ cause dissatisfaction amongst the customers.  
(a) Delay and cancellations of services  
(b) Timely services  
(c) Personal services  
(d) All of the above
4. \_\_\_\_\_ expresses staff willingness and confidence, and communication expresses your ability to convince.  
(a) Body Language  
(b) Soft Skills  
(c) Technical Skills  
(d) All of the above

### B. Subjective Questions

1. Describe the importance of soft skills during communicating with the customers.
2. Write the importance of body language and gestures in customer communication.
3. Explain the benefits of keeping promptness in customer service and a role in repeat business.
4. What are the various customer related documents maintained by the Customer Service Executive?
5. Explain in brief the importance of Customer Relationship Management.

## SESSION 3: SIGNIFICANCE OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Current Scenario of Tourism Industry in India

India, being a vast and diverse country, has a lot to offer to the visitors. Its glorious tradition and rich cultural heritage are linked with the development of tourism.

## NOTES

Its magnificent monuments attract large number of visitors from all over the world. Tourism is the largest service industry in India, with a contribution of 5.68 per cent of the National GDP and 8.78 per cent of the total employment in India. India witnesses more than 13.72 million annual foreign tourist arrivals and 650 million domestic tourist visits. The tourism industry in India generated about US\$ 100 billion in 2008 and is expected to increase up to US\$ 275.5 billion 2018 at a 9.4 per cent annual growth rate.

Foreign tourists perhaps spend more in India than almost any other big country worldwide. Tourist arrivals are projected to increase by over 22 per cent per year through till 2010. Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has also played an important role in the development of the industry, initiating advertising campaigns such as the 'Incredible India' campaign, which promoted India's culture and tourist attractions in a fresh and memorable way.

This campaign helped create a colourful image of India in the minds of tourists all over the world and directly led to an increase in interest among tourists. Tourism in India has created jobs both directly and indirectly in a variety of related sectors.

Almost 20 million people are now working in India's tourism industry.

### Initiatives to Boost Tourism

Government of India has taken several initiatives to promote tourism; such as grant to export houses, rebate in income tax, interest subsidy and import duty reduction. Hotel and Tourism industry has been declared as high priority industry for foreign investment. This priority entails automatic approval of 51 per cent investment of foreign equity, even allowing 100 per cent NRI investment.

To promote and strengthen the tourism activity in India, Government of India celebrated Tourism Day in 1998 for the first time in India. To provide awareness about tourism activity and boost tourism, the year 1999 was celebrated as 'Explore India Millennium Year'. In this year, the Ministry of Tourism presented



a great tableau of tourist activity in the Republic Day Parade. Ministry of Tourism also organises various tourism fair and festivals in different States and cities like dance festivals in Khajuraho and Konnar, and art and craft fair in Surajkund. Apart from this, Ministry of Tourism launched the year 2009 as 'Visit India Year' in International Tourism Exchange in Berlin, Germany.

### Future Prospects

India's travel and tourism sector ranks seventh in the world in terms of its total contribution to the country's GDP, according to an April 2017 report of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). According to this, the travel and tourism sector generated ₹ 14.1 trillion (USD 208.9 billion) in 2016, which is the world's seventh largest in terms of absolute size; the sum is equivalent to 9.6 per cent of India's GDP. Additionally, the sector created 40.3 million jobs in 2016, by which India ranks second in the world in terms of the total employment generated. The sector accounts for 9.3 per cent of the country's total jobs. India's Travel and Tourism sector was also the fastest growing amongst the G20 countries, growing by 8.5 per cent in 2016. WTTC asserted that India's figures are predominantly generated by domestic travel, which accounts for 88 per cent of the sector's contribution.

In 2019, for the first time in the history of India's travel and tourism sector, India was named the host country for the official celebration of the World Tourism Day on 27 September, themed, 'Tourism and Jobs: A Better Future for All'. The honour was well-timed as the sector's contribution to the country's economy was given recognition. Benefiting the larger ecosystem with its direct and indirect advantages, the sector today enjoys the status of being one of the key generators of employment in the country. In 2017–18, over 81.1 million Indians, accounting to 12.38 per cent of the total workforce, were employed by the sector, and this number is expected to grow manifold in the coming years.

As tourism diversifies, it has opened new avenues for employment for the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled talent across the length and breadth of the country.

### NOTES



## NOTES

To unleash the potential of the sector as a 'job creator', then there is a need to focus on creating a talent pool that meets the requirements of 40 million new jobs that will be created in the next five years (PHD Chamber Report, March 2019).

### **Constraints**

In India, major constraints in promotion and sustainability of tourism is low availability of airlines and air seats, poor tourism infrastructure, difficult accessibility to tourism destinations, scarcity of trained manpower and skilled staff, conditions of roads and quality of road transport, etc. Other factors which inhibit the growth of tourism activity in India includes poor hygienic conditions, and illiteracy of transport workers. Due to this, tourists are having poor or bad experience.

### **Significance of Travel and Tourism Industry**

Tourism in India and the world is growing at a very high rate, generating foreign exchange and producing direct and indirect jobs. These activities promote economic and social contribution of countries. Economic tourism is another sector helping India in preserving and sustaining the Rural Tourism and Natural Tourism in India.

### **Economic Significance**

Government of India plans the tourism activities in such a way that minimise destruction and more saving and sustenance of environment and culture, providing support to sale and sustenance of the culture of local area and habitat.

It makes a significant contribution to the economies of different nations of the world in various ways.

### **Creates Employment**

The biggest contribution that the industry makes to the economy of a country is creating a host of new jobs. Direct job opportunities are available as tour guides, tour planners and operators, travel consultants and in hotels, restaurants and resorts. As Hospitality and Tourism industry grows, so do these jobs. Jobs are also





created in several related industries such as the cruise industry, airlines, event management, amusement parks, etc.

### ***Boosts Other Local Industries***

Indirect jobs are created in several production and service areas like agriculture, food production sector, retail, restaurants, transportation, telecommunication services and several repair services like vehicle repair, mobile repair, etc. Indirect jobs are also created for government sectors like PWD, Nagar Nigam, etc., by way of enhanced requirement of well-maintained roads, bridges, flyovers, guest houses, etc.

### ***Generates Income***

Hospitality and Tourism sector generates income in a variety of ways. The Government earns revenue from the industry. The tourists put in a lot of money in their travel plans these days. Tour businesses and individuals involved in the sector also earn a lot. They, in turn, put the money back for further growth of the industry. Besides, income is also generated through the use of various services like hotels, restaurants, monuments and other places of tourist interest. These facilities are improved and better maintained to attract more tourists. So the benefit is all round. Money is spent by tourists on many other human needs while visiting a new place. They spend on medicines, clothes, food, transportation, entertainment and also on souvenirs. This supports global trade.

### ***Foreign Exchange Earnings***

This is the most important contribution made by the industry to the economy of a country. All touring expenditure incurred by foreign tourists is a source of foreign exchange earnings. Many countries of the world have made it mandatory for the tourists from abroad to carry a certain amount of foreign currency for the entire length of their stay. So, foreign tourists are the best means of bringing in foreign currency to the host nation. In 2015, Foreign Exchange Earnings for India from the industry were 16.94 billion dollars. This was 1 per cent more than the previous year.

## **NOTES**

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### ***Foreign Direct Investment***

As Hospitality and Tourism industry is strengthened by the Government of the country, investments in the sector from outsiders also rise. Foreign direct investment is found more in economies which are open and have excellent growth prospects. India is witnessing a period of growth in FDI with many global hotel groups establishing business in the country. This sector is included in the topmost 15 sectors, which bring in the maximum foreign direct investment.

### ***Preserves Traditional Industries***

Another advantage that the Hospitality and Tourism industry confers on to an economy is preservation of additional industries and handicrafts. Tourists all over the world take great interest in the indigenous products of the places that they visit. So, communities make all the efforts to maintain any quaint industry or form of art that they specialise in.

### ***Develops Diversification***

In places where only a single industry predominates, Hospitality and Tourism industry emerges as a lucrative one. Be it farming, mining, manufacturing or any other industry an economy depends on, this sector develops diversification and reduces risk.

### ***Builds Infrastructure***

More and more tourists are attracted by good infrastructural facilities. At the same time, when tourists come, much development of infrastructure takes place with the income generated. Thus, Hospitality and Tourism industry benefits almost every sector of the economy of a nation. Both developing and developed nations of the world are working to promote this industry to accelerate growth and development in their individual nations and in the world as a whole.

### **Socio-cultural Significance**

Tourism is an activity that involves the movement of people from one place to another. In the process, tourists bring along customs and cultures of their own countries to the host region, place or country on the



one hand, and learn and bring the culture of the host countries back home.

Through these interactions and communications between the tourists and the local community, various kinds of social importance can be achieved when tourism is in practise. Some of the important factors are described here.

### ***Improve the Way of Life***

#### *Positive change in life*

- (a) Tourism is such an activity which not only gives pleasure to the tourist but it also gives pleasure to the surrounding people and host. It helps in income generation for local people. The interaction between the tourists and local people helps in exchange of ideas and this exchange promotes social development, awareness and learning.
- (b) If any destination has good tourism features, government will also take interest to build new tourist infrastructure and facilities to strengthen more tourist activities.
- (c) Tourist activity helps to develop upgraded health facilities, transport, recreation and entertainment facilities.

#### *Reducing negative perceptions*

Interaction with tourists creates the path for receiving new ideas and values. It also improves the confidence and social values of the host communities. Interaction with the tourists helps to develop hospitable conduct amongst the workers associated to tourism industry in local areas.

### ***Encourage Cultural Exchange***

Tourist activities smoothen the path for exchange of cultural values and cultural diversities between the host country and tourists. If any tourist visits a particular country on a study tour, they get aware about the local culture, art and lifestyle which not only connects them to the different regions of the visited country but also opens the doors to globalisation.

## **NOTES**

## NOTES

For example, at the tourist destination Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh, most of the social activities revolves around tourism. Because of tourism, local people and guides have learned various languages like German, French and Japanese because most of the long staying tourists come from these countries.

### ***Boost for Cultural Conservation***

The tourist and host country generally share a cultural history with each other, this incidence provides knowledge and awareness about one another's culture, art and food habits. *Surajkund Mela* is one such fair which gives showcase the intricacies of Indian culture to different tourists. Kandariya Shilpgram is one of the centres in Khajuraho which provides knowledge of local art and culture to the tourists.

### **Environmental Significance**

The Tourism industry in India can have several positive and negative impacts on the environment, which are discussed below:

#### ***Direct Financial Contributions***

Tourism can contribute directly to the conservation of sensitive areas and habitats. Revenue from parks, such as entrance fees and other sources can be allocated specifically to pay for the protection and management of environmentally sensitive areas. Special fees for park operations or conservation activities can be collected from tourists or tour operators.

#### ***Contributions to Government Revenues***

Through Tourism Department, Indian Government collects money in more far-reaching and indirect ways that are not linked to specific parks or conservation areas. User fees, income tax, taxes on sales or rental of recreation equipment, and license fees for activities, such as rafting and fishing can provide government with the funds needed to manage natural resources. Such funds can be used for overall conservation programmes and activities, such as park ranger salaries and park maintenance.



**Improved Environmental Management and Planning**

Appropriate environmental management by tourism facilities, especially hotels, can reduce or minimise the damage to the environment. By planning in advance for tourism set ups and activities, damage done to the environment can be prevented. The development of tourism has propelled Indian government towards this direction leading to improved environmental management.

**Raising Environmental Awareness**

Tourism has the potential to increase public appreciation of the environment and to spread awareness of environmental problems as it brings people into closer contact with nature and the environment. This confrontation heightens awareness of the value of nature among the community and lead to environmentally conscious behaviour and activities to preserve the environment.

**Protection and Preservation of Environment**

Tourism can significantly contribute to environmental protection, conservation and restoration of biological diversity and sustainable use of natural resources. Because of their attractiveness, pristine sites and natural areas are identified as valuable and the need to keep the attraction alive can lead to the creation of national parks and wildlife parks.

In India, new laws and regulations have been enacted to preserve the forests and to protect native species. The coral reefs around the coastal areas and the marine life that depend on them for survival are also protected.

### Practical Exercise

**Activity 1**

List the state wise tourist inflow and outflow in India.

**Material Required**

Writing material

**Procedure**

- Visit a government Tourist Office in your state. Discuss with the managers about the tourist inflow and outflow state-wise in India.

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- Note down the important information in your notebook and prepare a list of the tourist inflow and outflow state-wise in India.
- Discuss the list in the class.

## Check Your Progress

### A. Fill in the Blanks

1. The first Indian Tourism Day was celebrated in \_\_\_\_\_.
2. FDI refers to \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ can contribute directly to the conservation of sensitive areas and habitat.
4. Tourism is an activity that involves the \_\_\_\_\_ from one place to another.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the centres in Khajuraho which provides the knowledge of local art and culture to the tourists.

### B. Subjective Questions

1. Explain the current scenario of travel and tourism industry in India.
2. Explain the economic importance of tourism for the development of nation.
3. Write the Socio-cultural importance of tourism.
4. Write the environmental significance of tourism.
5. Discuss the following in the class:
  - (a) Employment in Tourism industry
  - (b) Foreign Exchange earnings by tourism

## SESSION 4: ROLE OF TRAVEL AGENCIES AND TRAVEL DESK

### Functions of travel agencies

Travel agencies are identified as important middlemen between vendors and customers. It is typically a middleman between the tour wholesaler and transport providers on one hand, and tourist or travellers on the other. Apart from working as a ticketing agent, it sells the standard tour packages to the tourists. Traditionally

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the travel agency business has been dependent upon ticketing, more specifically the air tickets. The operation of each agency is based on the scope of its activities, scale of business, and the size of organisation.

The functions of a travel agency are explained in Table 3.2.

### Travel Information

Provision of travel information is the primary function of a travel agency. Up-to-date, accurate, and timely information regarding destinations, modes of travel, accommodation, sight-seeing, shopping, immigration, passport, visa, custom clearance, and procedure for health and security rules, and restricted area permit are collected, arranged, stored and shared with the customers, and principal service providers.

### Preparation of Itinerary

The term itinerary basically denotes the schedule of visit. Itinerary can be of different types, such as travel itinerary and tour itinerary. Travel itinerary includes the origin, destination, and all the transit points. However, in addition, the tour itinerary may include activities that the tourist may engage in during the visit. Itinerary guides the tourists for undertaking safe and comfortable travel. It helps in smooth conduct of the tour. Travel itinerary includes the domestic and international air itinerary before issuing the tickets. At present, with the help of CRS, travel agencies can easily prepare the itinerary and calculate the total air fare of the travel route.

### Tour Packaging and Costing

Travel agency prepares customised and readymade package keeping in view the preferences of target customers. Tour package generally contains the terms and conditions, do's and don'ts, inclusive or non-inclusive of services. There are different factors like modes of travel, client choice, income, age group, country, and region that determine the sale of the packages. After the identification of the target market, the travel agency liaison with the service provider and enters into a contract with them.

## NOTES



Costing is also another major function that includes various elements of cost in package tours. These elements include research and development, marketing, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, guide, staff training, and incidental expenditure.

**Table 3.2 Functions of a travel agency**

S.No.	Functions	Examples
1.	Travel Information	Passport, Visa, Customs, Counselling, Health, Security checks, Special permits, Clearances
2.	Itinerary Preparation	Offering and designing tailor-made or standard itinerary
3.	Reservation of tickets, Transport and Entry to cultural shows	Air: International and/or Domestic Surface or Sea: Train, Bus, Coach (both scheduled and charter services) Entry tickets to Entertainment or cultural shows
4.	Accommodation	Hotels, Resorts, Motels, Camping tents or other forms of accommodation based on the choice of its clients
5.	Tour Packaging and Costing	Liaison with the Tour Operator regarding Market research, Costing, Pricing and Promotion
6.	Travel Insurance	Personal or Baggage
7.	Foreign Currency	Selling and buying forex
8.	Organising	MICE, Entertainment nights
9.	As Handling agent	Ground handling; making personal arrangements for tourists at the destination

### Reservation and Issuance of Tickets

Issuance of tickets is a traditional function of the travel agency. It used to be a major source of income of the travel agency until recently. A travel agent sells airlines, train, cruise line, and bus tickets to its clients. They are accredited by the airlines as Preferred Sales Agent (PSA) or as agents to issue tickets on the behalf of airlines. Travel agents are allowed to maintain minimum stock of air tickets for which they keep security deposits with the airlines. They can also reserve, alter and cancel the tickets on the behalf of its clients.

### Accommodation Reservation

Reservation of hotel rooms is another major function of a travel agency. A travel agency reserves rooms, conference halls, restaurant, bar, and meeting room on



the request of clients and may give advance in case of bulk booking, otherwise the payment is settled subsequently. Reservation is also done for ground transportation, train, and cruise services. Advance reservation is also made for certain entertainment programmes.

## Travel Insurance

Travel insurance protects the tourists against personal and baggage loss. Insurance is the subject matter of solicitation and travel care insurance products are high on service excellence with world-wide coverage and great value for money. There are different types of insurance schemes.

For example, the TATA AIG offers a gamut of travel insurance products for the tourists during the package tours. These are the following facilities covered under the insurance schemes:

- Accidental death and dismemberment benefits for death or disability during the tour
- Accident and sickness medical expenses reimbursement.
- Sickness and accident related medical expenses during the travel.
- Baggage loss and delay benefits— for loss or delay in baggage delivery.
- Home burglary— theft at home during absence from home.
- Trip cancellation— for any probable cancellation of the trip.
- Missed connection or departure— Missed connection refers to a situation when a journey involves multiple flights; delay in one flight may cause missing of the subsequent flight. In case the journey is performed by a 'through ticket', i.e. one ticket for multiple sectors, it is the responsibility of the concerned airlines. However, in case the travel agent would have booked the tickets separately, then a separate insurance policy can only compensate the loss.
- Bounced hotel or airlines booking— it is dishonouring of the booking and denial of the stay or boarding to the client.

## NOTES

## NOTES

- Flight delay— for any delay in flights and consequent losses.

### Foreign exchange

Normally an authorised agent approved by the Reserve Bank of India can deal in foreign exchange. If a travel agent is an authorised agent for forex, it can buy or sell foreign currency with some commission. In case the agent is not authorised, it can act in between the Forex Agent and the tourist. The agent may provide service to the customers by levying some service charge as applicable.

### Foreign currencies

If travellers are traveling to a foreign country, sooner or later they have to exchange their money into the currency of the visited country. In most cases, it is better to change money in the foreign country than in a bank of their homeland, because the local banks offer a better exchange rate. Though the travellers have to be assured about it, they might also ask their travel agency for international currency exchange. Some of the countries in the world, their currencies and codes are given below.

Currency	Symbol	Code
Pounds sterling	£	GBP
US dollar	\$	USD
Indian rupee	₹	INR
Australian dollar	\$	AUD
Japanese yen	¥	JPY
Singapore dollar	S\$	SGD
Russian Rouble	₽	RUB
Euro	€	EUR

### Miscellaneous Services

The travel agent caters to all the aspects of MICE, business meetings, event management and exposition and incentives. A Travel agent makes customised arrangements for every specific requirement of the



customers. Miscellaneous services such as; document services, transfer, and pick up, reconfirmation of hotel rooms and airline seats, participation in FAM (familiarisation) tour, any inner line permit or any specific personal requirements of the clients at the destination. For example, the trade fairs division of certain travel agencies is extremely efficient that ensures meticulous planning for confirmation of hotel rooms, Indian meals, city tours, and buyer-supplier meets.

## **Functions of Travel Desk**

Hotels offer a comprehensive range of travel services with a professional touch. Their Travel Desk takes care of all the cumbersome work that goes into planning a trip. The Travel Desk is also a part of Front Office in a hotel. It takes care of the travel arrangements of a guest, like air-ticketing, railway reservation, sightseeing, tour packages, airport or railway station pick up or drop, etc., as per their request. The hotel may operate the Travel desk or it may be outsourced to an external travel agency.

### **Arrival and Departure Assistance**

Arranging pick-up and drop services for guest at the time of their arrival and departure at the airport or railway station. It provides vehicles on request to the guests at pre-determined rates.

### **Ticketing**

Making travel arrangements like railway reservation, cancellation, amendments, or purchasing air-tickets for guests.

### **Sightseeing Arrangements**

Organise half-day or full day sightseeing tours in and around the city as per the requirement or booking of the customers. A Travel Desk also arranges for the guides who can communicate in the guest's language.

## **Airport Representative**

An Airport Representative is an important person in the Front Office of any luxury hotel or travel company.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

## **NOTES**



## NOTES

This person has to facilitate the guests at the airport on arrival. An Airport Representative is responsible for:

1. Greeting hotel guests at the airport.
2. Arranging hotel transportation for guests from the airport to the hotel, such as airport express train, airport shuttle and bus.
3. Answering inquiries from guests about the different means of transportation, journey and weather or climate as and when the travellers ask.
4. Assisting in the check-in, coordinating with airlines staff in case of lost or mishandled baggage.
5. Taking hotel room bookings.
6. Confirmation of flight timings
7. Assisting departing guests at the airport.
8. Liaising with airlines for special arrangements, such as wheelchair for the guests.
9. Act as a Sale Representative for the hotel at the airport.

### Meet and Greet Services for a Tourist at the Airport, Railway or Bus Station

The Customer Service Executive must follow the following procedures to welcome and greet tourists or guests at the airport:

#### **Information of Tourists**

The Customer Service Executive of a travel company should collect information about the customers or tourists which are to be welcomed by him. The information about the tourists includes the tourist's name, country of origin, airport (terminals of arrival), flight details, tour programmes, duration of tour, special request by the tourists (if any), etc. All this information should be collected from the Tour Operation Manager at least one day before of the arrival of tourists. All the details about the customers must be known by the Customer Service Executive of the travel company while imparting meet and greet services to the clients.



### **Ensure Transfer Arrangements**

Customer Service Executive must also ensure about the transfer arrangements as per the requirements of the tourists and the number of pax at the airport. He must follow up the Transport Operator or Car-Rental Company for the transfer arrangement and must get the car number and driver's mobile number before departing to the airport for receiving the tourists. He must ensure by calling or email that the booking of transport still remains, if booking was done many days earlier.

### **Ensure Hotel Bookings**

The bookings of hotels at different tourist destinations covered by the tourists during the whole journey must be followed up before the guests' arrival and check-in to the hotels so that the tourists do not have to face any type of inconvenience during their tour.

### **Pick Tourists' Documents**

Before departing for the airport to meet the customer, the Customer Service Executive of a travel company must collect and be ready with the tourist documents like tour itinerary, hotel vouchers, and any other request by the tourist (i.e. visa on arrival or any special entry permit) to be handed over to the tourists while meeting.

### **Prepare Placard**

A paging board or placard is always used by the hotel Travel Desk, Concierge or Customer Service Executive of any travel company while picking up guests from the airport, railway station, bus terminal, etc. This paging board has the name of the guest mentioned on it along with his/her details. This card is prepared and collected by the representative of the travel company for receiving the guest at the airport.

Following details are printed:

- Name of the guest (First + Last Name)
- Name of the company
- Flight Number
- Flight Time



*Fig. 3.7 Sample of placard for picking up the guest*

## NOTES

Tips while preparing the placard or paging board:

- Do not use salutation if you are not sure about the same, as names can be misleading at times.
- Double check the spelling, as no guest would like to see their names wrongly spelt.
- The A4 size sheet used for placard printing should be clean, not crumpled and also stain free.
- Always use font size between 70 and 85 depending upon the length of the guest name.

### *Take Welcome Kit*

The airport representative or CSE of the hotel or any travel company uses welcome kit that includes the welcome greetings, bouquet (flower bunch or garland) to greet the guests or tourists while arriving at the airport.

### *Ensure Reporting Time and Flight Arrival time*

The CSE of the travel company must ensure the reporting time at the airport and the flight time of arrival, flight number, etc., and they must leave two hours before or as per the traffic on the road. They also should update the information related to change in flight time or cancelled due to weather conditions (in case).

### *Escort to the Hotel and be Friendly and Familiar*

After welcoming the guests or tourists at the airport, assist them to handle their baggage to the vehicle and ask them about their journey and try to make them feel comfortable with you. Answer all the queries of the tourists with good representation and without hesitation. Don't overdo it and do not ask personal questions. Don't avoid if they ask something. Always remember that your first appearance and impression can make them feel happy for the whole tour programme. Lastly, help them to check into the hotel as per the booking made by the company and hand over all the documents docket containing hotel vouchers and itinerary with a gentle smile and tell





them about their next programme of the tours as per the schedule in the itinerary.

### **Personality traits of front office staff of any hotel or travel company**

The receptionist is the link between a guest and the hotel, and meets people, greets them, makes them comfortable, and helps them in all the possible ways. It is very difficult to draw a line for the receptionist's duties. A guest may ask him for the cricket score; shopping; tourist interest places; address of known or unknown people, railway, air or bus; booking distance between different places; weather report; etc. The receptionist has to make sure that the guest feels at home and that is why, a hotel is called a home away from home. For this, a receptionist should possess certain qualities considered as pleasant.

1. Well dressed as per the company policy.
2. Pleasant Personality— good manners and a smile are natural assets
3. Eagerness to help
4. Respect all— young, old, rich, not so rich
5. Sense of responsibility—should be responsible and ready to take responsibility
6. Alert and focussed mind— essential for methodical and accurate work
7. Neatness— this imparts self-confidence and pride
8. Accuracy— it is a way to attain perfection
9. Loyalty: should be loyal to both management and customers
10. Intelligence: Intelligent enough to take decisions
11. Tact: Tactful to handle any situation
12. Yearning to be a good receptionist

### **NOTES**

## Practical Exercise

### Activity 1

Perform a role play of the Meet and Greet services offered to a foreign tourist group at the airport by the representative.

#### Material Required

Writing material

#### Procedure

- Classify all the students into two groups— tourists and hotel or travel company representative.
- Assign dialogues to each student to perform in the role play.
- Students in each group perform different duties as per their role.

### Activity 2

Visit a hotel or a travel company's Front Office in your city and demonstrate the meet and greet services performed by the desk.

#### Material Required

Writing material

#### Procedure

1. Plan a visit to a travel company office or a hotel travel desk.
2. Discuss with the travel agency Tour Manager for receiving and greeting the tourists.
3. Note the procedures and list the activities.
4. Demonstrate the duties and activities performed by the desk.
5. Prepare a report and discuss in the class.

## Check Your Progress

### A. Multiple Choice Questions

1. The Travel Desk is also a part of \_\_\_\_\_ in a hotel.
  - (a) Security
  - (b) Accounting rooms
  - (c) division
  - (d) Front Office
2. \_\_\_\_\_ refers to making travel arrangements like railway reservation, cancellation, amendments, or purchasing air-tickets for a guest.
  - (a) Ticketing
  - (b) Selling
  - (c) Auditing
  - (d) Check-in



3. \_\_\_\_\_ has to check facilitation of the guests at the airport during the time of guest arrival.
  - (a) Airport Representative
  - (b) Front Office Associate
  - (c) Hotel Manager
  - (d) Travel Desk
4. A \_\_\_\_\_ is always used by the hotel Travel Desk/Concierge or Customer Service Executive of any travel company while picking up guests from the airport, railway station and bus terminals.
  - (a) Paging board or placard
  - (b) Pick Me Card
  - (c) We are here Card
  - (d) Welcome Card
5. \_\_\_\_\_ should update the information related to flight time change or cancelled due to weather conditions (in case).
  - (a) Customer Service Executive (Meet and Greet)
  - (b) Tour Operator
  - (c) Programme Coordinator
  - (d) Travel Agent

### B. Subjective Questions

1. Write the functions of the Travel Desk of a hotel.
2. What are the personality traits needed in the Front Office staff in a hotel or a travel company?
3. What is a placard? Why is it prepared?
4. Explain the airport duties of the Concierge in a hotel.
5. Discuss the following in the class and write a short note on:
  - (a) Placard
  - (b) Welcome kit